DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 307 316 TM 013 446

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TITLE Alternative Teacher Certification in Texas.
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, March 27-31, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Board of Education Policy; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Nontraditional Education; Program Evaluation; Qualitative Research; State Legislation; *State Programs; *Teacher Certification; Teacher Education Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Alternative Teacher Certification; *Texas

ABSTRACT

A qualitative analysis of information pertinent to alternative teacher certification in Texas is presented. Texas reform legislation passed in 1984 included a requirement for the State Board of Education to provide a route to teacher certification for those who were not graduates of teacher education programs. Those persons would be required to pass admission and certification tests required of other candidates, with the exception of the test for professional development. A 1-year supervised internship was also required. For the 1988-89 school year, a total of 10 alternative programs were approved involving 869 interns, of whom 453 are minority group interns. Information sources for this analysis included: (1) reports generated by six state agency staff after monitoring visits; (2) observations of interns, supervising teachers, and program personnel who train the interns; (3) questionnaires administered to and interviews conducted with interns and other role groups; (4) progress reports compiled by program administrators; and (5) team reports submitted to the State Board of Education. Documents reviewed by staff and team members during visits included college transcripts; results of classroom observations and evaluations conducted by local districts; admission and certification test results; and program curricula, policies, textbooks, and records. Results show that legislative and public interest in alternative routes to teacher certification will continue and that experiences with alternative certification in other states reflect those in Texas. Against this social and political backdrop, colleges and universities preparing preservice teachers find themselves in an uncomfortable position. Another implication of alternative certification is the entry of new organizational structures for delivering teacher education. Program guidelines for alternative teacher certification in Texas, a synopsis of programs approved for 1988-89, a list of names/addresses of program directors, and five data tables are appended. (TJH)

ED307316

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Rationale

One of the challenges facing teacher education in the current reform climate is the proliferation of alternative avenues for teacher certification. States are opening more efficient routes to certification to individuals who did not make decisions early in their college careers to pursue traditional paths to certification (AACTE, 1985). As programs are initiated by policymakers, new designs are being implemented in several states, including the state of Texas, and concerns about the quality of teachers prepared through alternative routes continue to surface (AACTE, 1986; Jaschik, 1986; Watts, 1986). While the number of programs is still relatively small, a body of information is emerging which can provide insight into questions of program quality and, more importantly, the quality of those persons entering the classrooms through alternative teacher certification routes.

The purposes of this paper are (1) to describe the alternative route to teacher certification in Texas, (2) to draw comparisons from the results of monitoring and evaluating each program, and (3) to describe the impact of these evaluation efforts on State Board of Education policy and program regulations.

Background

The Texas reform legislation passed in 1984 included a requirement for the State Board of Education to provide a route to teacher

certification for persons who were not graduates of teacher education programs. Those individuals would be required to pass admission and certification tests required of other candidates with the exception of the test for professional development. A one-year, supervised internship was also required.

The State Board of Education enacted regulations (Appendix A) which require a minimum 2.5 grade point average (on a 4.0 scale) and a minimum number of semester hours in the teaching area for which certification is sought. Certificates in general elementary, bilingual education, and secondary subject areas are authorized. Program approval depends upon actual or projected vacancies within a district submitting a proposal for board approval. According to board rule, each program is required to provide training in specified topics through either college coursework or inservice hours; the number of hours and the type of training depends upon the specific certificate sought. Appendices B and C present a comparison of the requirements for the traditional and alternative routes to certification in Texas for program content and testing requirements.

Beginning in 1985, one school district proposed a program which was approved by the State Board of Education for a one-year pilot. For school year 1986-87, that program was reapproved and eight others approved for one-year pilots. Although the State Board rule specifically authorized alternative certification programs for school districts, several universities and one regional service center were approved to offer alternative certification programs in 1986-87 school year. With the expansion of the alternative certification programs, the staff of the state education agency was directed to closely monitor the

programs and to conduct on-site evaluation before programs could request reapproval for up to three years. After on-site evaluations in the spring of 1987, the State Board of Education reviewed the team reports and reapproved all programs for varying numbers of years, depending upon team recommendations and program requests. To date, each program which has requested continuation has been reapproved. Implementation of the programs at the Longview Independent School District and San Antonio Independent School District has been postponed at district initiative. For school years 1988-89, a total of 10 programs are approved involving 869 interns of whom 453 are minority group interns. Appendices D, E, and F present a summary of descriptive information for the programs for school years 1985 through 1989.

Data Collection

Six state agency staff members conducted at least two monitoring visits to each program during the school year to examine documents pertaining to the interns; to observe training sessions; and to interview interns, experienced teachers, college faculty (if appropriate) and administrators. The on-site evaluations were conducted by teams of professional educators and included university faculty and administrators as well as public school teachers and administrators. Each team was accompanied on-site by an agency staff member who provided a uniform training session and served as a resource to the team chair during the visit. Each team was asked to verify that the program was in compliance with state board rule and to comment upon program and interns strengths and weaknesses.

Information Sources

The information used for this paper includes (1) reports generated by state agency staff after monitoring visits; (2) observations of interns, supervising teachers, and those program personnel delivering training to interns; (3) questionnaires and interviews of interns and other role groups; (4) progress reports compiled by program administrators; and, (5) team reports submitted to the State Board of Education. The documents reviewed by staff and team members during visits included college transcripts, results of classroom observations and evaluations conducted by the local districts, admission and certification test results, as well as program curricula, policies, textbooks, and records.

Analysis

The information sources were qualitatively analyzed to identify problems and strengths unique to each program and common to all programs.

Findings

Strengths common to all programs during the 1986-87 evaluations included the following:

1. The programs attracted highly motivated, enthusiastic interns often individuals with experience in teaching or longstanding interest in becoming a teacher. Interns were usually more mature than other first-year teachers, were seeking to make career changes, and brought a variety of work experiences to the classroom. The percentage of alternative certification interns passing the certification tests consistently exceeded the percentage of traditional route candidates.

2. There was a uniform perception among principals and supervising teachers that the particular intern(s) assigned to their particular school must be unique and that no other(s) could be such an asset to their school.
3. Principals and supervising teachers often initially expressed negative feelings about the alternative certification programs but generally expressed high levels of support for individual interns and for the program before the end of the school year based upon the performance of the intern(s).
4. An increased level of communication and collaboration was seen among participating colleges and universities and school districts in the design of programs, including course offerings and the selection of particular faculty to work with the program, as well as policy-making for the programs.
5. A larger proportion of minority candidates is found in the alternative route than in the traditional route to certification within the state. Interns report that most were financially unable to return to college to secure certification and that the alternative route offered them an opportunity to be paid during the internship.
6. Interns generally gave positive evaluations to both college courses taken as part of the training program and to inservice training sessions designed and delivered by alternative certification program personnel. For programs administered by colleges and universities, the main difference between the alternative and traditional route to certification was the paid internship.

7. There is some evidence that interns were at least as effective in the classroom as new teacners entering through the traditional route. Two programs, Houston ISD and the El Paso area, included comparisons of student learning in their required final reports. Scores on standardized tests were compared for students in interns' classrooms and in other beginning teachers' classrooms. No significant differences were noted on the basis of greater than predicted gain.

Weaknesses common to all programs during 1986-87 included the following:

1. There was a need to improve communication with those inquiring about the program, especially to clarify program requirements early in the screening process. During the initial year of implementation for each program, administrators were overwhelmed with inquiries from the public. Interest in each program far exceeded the anticipated response.
2. In those programs where interns were not ready for classroom assignment the first day of school because of the training schedule, all participants strongly urged that training begin earlier to enable placement before the first day of class.
3. Supervising teachers needed a better orientation to the new program and its requirements. A continuing, pervasive problem was identified related to the use of release time: supervising teachers preferred to meet more informally, during planning periods or at other time when they were not pulled away from their own students.

Results

Based upon the 1986-87 team reports and staff monitoring, the State Board of Education amended its rule guiding the alternative certification programs. The entry requirements for the bilingual certificate were strengthened by requiring more breadth in coursework related to subjects taught in public schools. To meet district needs, an additional certificate, English as a Second Language, was also authorized. In response to interns' suggestions, passing the basic skills test was made an admission requirement rather than a certification requirement: this avoids the situation where an intern leaves a job to enter the program, teaches for the school year, fails to pass the basic skills test, and fails to secure certification. Because of the nature of the alternative certification programs, remediation of deficiencies in basic skills is not a feasible component of the interns' training program.

In the spring of 1988, team visits were again conducted. Problems noted during the previous year with communication and having interns assigned to schools for the first day of class had been addressed in the second year of implementation. However, it was noted that the many new districts which had joined the various programs experienced many of the same first-year implementation problems previously seen in other districts. The issue of release time continued to be cited as a weakness by teams, and the state agency staff was directed to closely monitor this aspect with the understanding that the State Board would adjust board rule if the current requirements are not feasible.

At the request of several programs, additional shortage areas were addressed by authorization of one-year pilot projects to train teachers

for a limited assignment certificate in special education resource rooms and in secondary reading assignments.

Implications

It is clear that legislative and public interest in alternative routes to teacher certification will continue and that experiences with alternative certification in other states reflect those in Texas (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1987; SREB, 1988). In addition, the United States Department of Education continues to support and encourage alternative certification routes for teachers (U. S. Department of Education, 1987). Against this social and political backdrop, colleges and universities preparing preservice teachers find themselves in an uncomfortable position. Criticism of alternative certification programs by colleges and universities is seen as self-serving, and legitimate concerns for the education of future teachers become suspect when voiced by teacher education faculty. Despite the dangers involved in questioning the "Emperor's clothes" of alternative teacher certification, the Southern Regional Consortium of Colleges of Education (1988) adopted "Guidelines for Alternative Certification Programs" which specifically advocate holding alternative programs accountable to the same standards of quality as traditional teacher education programs.

Some colleges and universities accommodated the alternative certification movement by adapting their approved programs for delivery to these nontraditional students. University-based alternative certification programs in Texas, like those in other states, may lead to a master's degree if interns meet requirements of the graduate program.

Another implication of alternative certification programs in Texas is the entry of new organizational structures for delivering teacher education. Some alternative certificate programs are cooperatively directed by districts and universities, and when this is the case, the conceptualization of the programs, as well as the day-to-day administration of the programs, are positively affected by the increased levels of collegiality.

Questions about alternative certification programs which have not been dealt with in systematic ways include (a) comparisons of retention rates for alternative certification interns and traditional route beginning teachers in similar settings and (b) examinations of the effects of alternative route teachers on the workplace over time. If this is indeed a more select, mature group of teachers, then we can anticipate some effects from their entry into the profession. We might expect that more mature individuals making a career change and given additional on-the-job support would be retained at higher rates. If, as some claim, the interns are higher quality teachers, then positive effects should surface in improved student learning and an improved profession. Answers to these questions await further investigation.

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Appendix A

ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATION IN TEXAS

"THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION BY RULE SHALL PROVIDE FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF PERSONS WHO ARE NOT GRADUATES OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS."

The above citation from Texas Education Code §13.035(a) was the basis for Board rule providing for alternative certification in the State of Texas. Under this rule persons who hold degrees from regionally-accredited institutions of higher education and who meet prerequisites for admission to an approved alternative certification program may be recommended to the Commissioner of Education for teacher certification upon satisfactory completion of specified requirements of the approved program. Twelve alternative certification program sites were approved by the State Board of Education for the 1988-89 school year.

Admission Requirements

Alternative certification draws from the pool of college graduates who have subject matter expertise in areas for which school districts have an actual or anticipated need. Minimum admission requirements include an overall grade point average of no less than 2.5 on a four-point system as well as a 2.5 grade point average for those semester hours in a subject or combination of subjects as required for placement at the level and/or in the area(s) for which there is need. Candidates for admission must also demonstrate possession of basic skills in mathematics, reading, and writing by receiving acceptable scores on the state-mandated basic skills test (or its equivalent as determined by the Commissioner of Education).

Prerequisites for Assignment

Prior to assignment as teacher of record, an intern seeking elementary certification must complete three semester hours of reading (An additional three hours of reading must be completed no later than completion of first semester as an intern. Six additional semester hours emphasizing early childhood and kindergarten curriculum and instructional methods are to be completed no later than completion of the internship). Those seeking bilingual education/ESL certification must give evidence of oral and written language proficiency for bilingual education assignments. Candidates for bilingual/ESL and ESL certification must complete 6 of 12 semester hours inclusive of the concepts of linguistics, language acquisition, bilingual/ESL methodology, and culture. (The remaining 6 hours are to be completed no later than completion of the internship.) All alternative certification programs must provide for a specified number of student contact hours prior to assignment of the intern as teacher of record.

Classroom Assignment/Training/Supervision

During the period of classroom assignment, the intern will continue to receive training in teaching methods and classroom management in

addition to completing those semester hour requirements specified above. An approved alternative certification plan must provide for the supervision of the intern as teacher of record by a supervising (mentor) teacher identified on the career ladder as level two or higher in the subject area(s) and/or at the level for which the intern is to be certified. Both the intern and the supervising teacher must be provided released time for observations/evaluations of teaching.

Recommendation for Certification

Upon successful completion of a one-year internship, satisfactory or better appraisal, and possessions of acceptable scores on the state-mandated certification test(s) for the subject(s) that are to be taught, the school district recommends the teacher intern for certification.

ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS APPROVED FOR 1988-89

. DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

This plan provides training and a supervised internship in the district's identified areas of critical need: Pre-K-6 bilingual, pre-K-6 general elementary, and secondary mathematics. Some coursework is delivered by East Texas State University. The program for 1988-89 provides for early identification of vacancies, required training during the summer, and assignment as teachers of record at the beginning of the school year.

. EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER, REGION XX (SAN ANTONIO)

Coordinated by Region XX Education Service Center in cooperation with independent school districts within its region and institutions of higher education (United Colleges of San Antonio), this plan provides a supervised internship in the following areas of identified need: Pre-K-6 elementary, pre-K-12 ESL, pre-K-6 bilingual education, and grades 6-12 secondary. A pre-K-12 pilot program for the special education resource room teacher has also been approved. The program for 1988-89 provides for early identification of vacancies, required training during the summer, and assignment as teachers of record at the beginning of the school year.

. EL PASO AREA ISDs/THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

School districts in the El Paso area in cooperation with The University of Texas at El Paso provide internship in identified areas of critical teacher shortage (grades pre-K-6 bilingual; pre-K-6 elementary; and grades 6-12 programs in mathematics, science, English, English/reading, and English/ESL) with multilevel supervision and intensive graduate level coursework leading to certification and a possible Master's degree. The program for 1988-89 provides for early identification of vacancies, required training during the summer, and assignment as teachers of record at the beginning of the school year.

. FORT WORTH INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT--BILINGUAL

Fort Worth ISD is implementing a pre-K-6 bilingual alternative certification program to fill one of the district's most critical needs. Applicants attend an area university to meet pre-assignment training requirements, observe in summer schools in Fort Worth ISD, and attend inservice training in August prior to the all-district inservice. They are assigned as teachers of record in the fall and attend workshops after school and on Saturdays. Prior to being recommended for certification, they complete 6 additional hours of coursework. During the year, they are supervised by a mentor teacher, appraised under the Texas Teacher Appraisal System, and must pass the state ExCET for bilingual education before being recommended for certification.

. FORT WORTH INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT--SECONDARY

Fort Worth ISD has entered into a cooperative agreement with Texas Christian University General Dynamics of Fort Worth, and other corporations to train secondary mathematics/science teachers over the next two years. The participants identified for this program are presently engineers who are in their final year before retirement. During their final year with the corporation, they will take 9 semester hours in methods at TCU and concomitantly be given released time to observe in school settings. During the second year, they will become teachers of record, attend workshops/inservices and be supervised by mentor teachers. They will be appraised under the Texas Teacher Appraisal System and must pass the ExCET in their specific area before being recommended for certification.

. HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

The district provides training for interns in grades pre-K-6 elementary, pre-K-6 bilingual, and pre-K-12 ESL. Local colleges and universities deliver coursework in reading, bilingual/ESL methodology, and early childhood education. The program for 1988-89 provides for early identification of vacancies, required training during the summer, and assignment as teachers or record at the beginning of the school year.

. LONGVIEW INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Longview and Marshall Independent School Districts, in cooperation with The University of Texas at Tyler, provides teacher training in the following areas of critical need: Grades 6-12 English, mathematics, and science.

. PAN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY at BROWNSVILLE

Pan American University at Brownsville cooperates with area independent school districts to provide teacher training in areas of critical need: Pre-K-6 bilingual; pre-K-6 general elementary; pre-K-12 ESL; grades 6-12 secondary. Interns receive support at the campus level as well as from university supervisors. A pre-K-12 pilot program in generic special education has also been approved.

. PAN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY at EDINBURG

Pan American University at Edinburg cooperates with surrounding independent school districts to provide teacher training in the following areas of critical need: Pre-K-6 elementary; pre-K-6 bilingual/ESL; pre-K-12 ESL; grades 6-12 secondary. The university provides selected courses for each program and shares the responsibility with the school district to supervise a one-year internship. A major objective of the program is the early identification of prospective candidates so that prerequisites education requirements are completed prior to the assignment as teacher of record at the beginning of the school year.

. SAN ANTONIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

San Antonio Independent School District, in cooperation with The University of Texas at San Antonio, works with Pre-K-6 elementary/ bilingual teacher trainees in 15 elementary schools over a period of two years. During the first year candidates serve as teaching assistants; during the second year candidates serve as intern teachers of record. Each candidate is under the direction of the same supervising teacher both years. This plan includes a research component to assess growth in the teaching performance of students enrolled in the alternative certification program and in the regular University of Texas at San Antonio elementary teacher certification program.

. TARLETON STATE UNIVERSITY

Tarleton State University accepts contracts from independent school districts to train teachers in areas of critical need at grade levels Pre-K-6 and 6-12. This plan provides intensive summer pre-assignment instruction in core curriculum, structured around the METS model of teaching. Participants are then place in sponsoring districts as teachers of record under the supervision of mentor teachers, school principals, and university faculty. Interns meet monthly in seminar to receive further instruction based on actual needs. Coursework is completed during a second summer at the university. Completion of the secondary program provides the individual with 24 semester hours of graduate coursework that can be applied toward a Master's degree. Elementary interns participate in a two-year program that includes 39 semester hours of intensive training. Completion of the elementary program provides the individual 30 graduate semester hours that can be applied to a Master's degree.

. TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY

Texas A & M University, in cooperation with local school districts, provides intensive graduate-level training of interns in identified areas of teacher shortage: Grades 6-12 mathematics and science.

Agency Contacts

For additional information on Alternative Certification, please contact Dr. William Wale or Dr. James Salmon in the Division of Teacher Education, 512/463-9327; or write to the Division of Teacher Education, Texas Education Agency, 1701 North Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78701-1494.

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Appendix B

Comparison of Traditional and Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification in Texas--1988

Program Requirements

	Traditional	Alternative
General Education	60 semester hours	assumed in the required B.A.
Teaching Specialization	24 to 48 semester hours	18 to 24 semester hours in the required B.A.
Professional Development	18 semester hours, including student teaching	0 to 12 semester hours, including one-year supervised internship a. grades pre-K-6--6 sem. hours reading and 6 semester hours early childhood curriculum and methods b. grades 7-12--no semester hours required c. grades pre-K-12 ESL--12 semester hours of bilingual focus d. grades pre-K-6 bilingual/ESL--12 semester hours bilingual focus

Appendix C

Comparison of Testing Requirements for Traditional and Alternative Teacher Certification Routes in Texas

	Traditional	Alternative
Basic Skills	PreProfessional Skills Test (ETS)	PreProfessional Skills Test (ETS) or a test approved by the Commissioner of Education (only the FAST developed by Houston ISD has been approved)
Certification	Professional Development and Teaching Field	Teaching Field; legislative exemption from the professional development test

Appendix D

Growth of the Alternative Teacher Certification Program in Texas between 1985-1989

Year	Number of Programs	Number of Districts
1985-86	1	1
1986-87	8	32
1987-88	9	74
1988-89	10	116

Texas Alternative Certification Programs
as Implemented for 1987-88*

Programs	# of ISDs	White/Non-Hisp.	Hispanic	Black	Other	Total
Dallas ISD	1	30	6	6	1	43
ESC Region XX	18	57	32	3	0	92
El Paso/UTEP	7	22	20	0	0	42
Houston ISD	1	64	10	22	0	96
PAU-Brownsville	9	52	52	0	0	104
PAU-Edinburg	14	40	65	1	0	106
San Antonio ISD	1	1	9	0	0	10
Tarleton St. U	19	24	0	0	0	24
Texas A & M	4	5	1	1	0	7
TOTALS	74	295	195	33	1	**524

**229 Minority Interns/524 Total Interns = 43.7%

*Data collected November 1987

Appendix E

Texas Alternative Certification Programs
as Implemented for 1988-89*

Programs	# of ISDs	White/Non-Hisp.	Hispanic	Black	Other	Total
Dallas ISD	1	55	26	35	4	120
ESC Region XX	31	104	70	7	3	184
El Paso/UTEP	7	19	28	1	0	48
Ft. Worth ISD-Bilingual	1	4	5	0	1	10
Houston ISD	1	95	43	69	2	209
PAU-Brownsville	11	48	92	0	0	140
PAU-Edinburg	14	29	66	1	0	96
Tarleton St. U	45	51	0	0	0	51
Texas A & M	5	11	0	0	0	11
TOTALS	116	416	330	113	10	**869

**453 Minority Interns/869 Total Interns = 52%

*Data collected November 1988

Appendix I